

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2133

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 1271

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, WB, UR

SUBJECT: HESS' HEALTH

1. SOVIET DOCTOR AGREED AT QUADRIPARTITE SPANDAU DOCTOR'S MEETING JULY 24 THAT HESS SHOULD BE GIVEN TWO EXAMINATIONS ON OUT-PATIENT BASIS NEXT MONTH AT BRITISH MILITARY HOSPITAL. SOVIET AGREEMENT, WHICH APPARENTLY ENDS SIX-MONTH MINUET IN WHICH BRITISH HAVE URGED TESTS, US AND FRENCH HAVE SUPPORTED AND SOVIETS HAVE INSISTED THERE WAS NO NEED, COMES AFTER HESS HAS LOST APPROXIMATELY 14 POUNDS IN LAST EIGHT WEEKS.

2. HESS HAS LATELY SHOWN FLAGGING SPIRITS, INCONSISTENT APPETITE AND DETERIORATING VISION AND IS PRESENTLY CONFINED TO BED. SOVIET DOCTOR, WHO INITIALLY TOOK POSITION JULY 24 THAT HIS CONDITION WAS "WHOLLY SATISFACTORY," NOW SAYS THAT HE IS IMPROVING BUT WEAK. BRITISH DOCTOR HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT GRAVE CONSEQUENCES COULD RESULT IF WEIGHT LOSS CONTINUED AT SAME RATE FOR ANOTHER MONTH.

3. FIRST PROPOSED TEST WOULD BE OF PRISONER'S BOWELS, SECOND OF KIDNEYS IN EFFORT TO DETERMINE CAUSE OF
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DETERIORATING CONDITION. DOCTORS AGREED THAT U.S.

DOCTOR COULD DETERMINE PROCEDURES AND TIMING FOR TESTS IN AUGUST, WHICH IS US MONTH AT PRISON. BOTH TESTS WILL, HOWEVER, BE SUBJECT TO HESS CONCURRENCE. DOCTORS ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT STIMULUS OF TESTS MIGHT BE TOO GREAT FOR HESS IN PRESENT CONDITON AND THAT IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO BUILD HIM UP AT PRISON FOR TIME. DOCTORS AGREED FURTHER THAT HESS SHOULD RECEIVE EYE EXAMINATION AT PRISON TO DIAGNOSE CAUSE OF WEAKENING VISION FIRST NOTED IN ROUTINE EXAMINATION BY US OPTOMETRIST IN LATE JUNE.

4. COMMENT: SOVIET CONCURRENCE FOR TESTS AFTER LONG PERIOD OF OPPOSITION AND DELAY MAY STEM FROM ASSURANCES GIVEN BY ALLIED OCTORS THAT IT IS NOT ENVISAGED THAT HESS WOULD STAY OVERNIGHT OUTSIDE PRISION. ON OTHER HAND, RATHER SUBSTANTIAL WEIGHT LOSS MAY HAVE RAISED CONCERNS THAT HESS DOES HAVE HEALTH PROBLEM THAT REQUIRES PROMPT ATTENTION IF HE IS TO BE MAINTAINED AT PRISON. SOVIETS MAY ALSO VIEW MORE FORTHCOMING POSITION ON MEDICAL MATTERS AS WAY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO BE HUMANITARIAN WITHOUT YIELDING TO REQUESTS THAT HESS BE FREED.BORG

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